

REMARKS

This is in full and timely response to the Office Action dated March 11, 2005.
Reexamination in light of the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Claims 2, 4, 8-9, 11-13 and 23-31 are currently pending in this application, with claims 2 and 23 being independent. *No new matter has been added.*

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. 112

While not conceding the propriety of the rejection and in order to advance prosecution of the above-identified application, the features of claims 16 and 22 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of their underlying subject matter.

Withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim objections

While not conceding the propriety of the rejection and in order to advance prosecution of the above-identified application, the features of claims 18 and 22 have been canceled without prejudice or disclaimer of their underlying subject matter.

Withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. §103

Claims 2, 4, 8, 9 and 11-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being allegedly obvious over U.S. Patent No. 4,176,034 to Stoger et al. (Stoger).

Claims 15, 17-19 and 21 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102 as being allegedly anticipated by Stoger.

Claim 20 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being allegedly obvious over Stoger.

Claims 16 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being allegedly obvious over Stoger in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,148,204 to Dötzer et al. (Dötzer).

If the allowance of the claims is not forthcoming at the very least and a new grounds of rejection is made at least against amended claim 2, then a *new non-final Office Action* is respectfully requested at least for the reasons provided hereinbelow.

These rejections are respectfully traversed for at least for the reasons found within the Amendment In Response To Non-Final Office Action filed on December 27, 2005, and at least the following reasons.

The Office Action makes reference to prior claim 14, contending that figure 2 of Stoger discloses the subject matter of prior claim 14 (Office Action at page 6).

In response, while not conceding the propriety of the rejection and in order to advance prosecution of the above-identified application, the features of claim 14 have been wholly incorporated into claim 2 to form amended claim 2. Found within amended claim 2 (which is prior claim 14), the transportation chamber is connected to a post-treating chamber by a third gate valve, connected to a loading side wafer container by a fourth gate valve, and connected to an unloading side wafer container by a fifth gate valve. Yet, the Office Action has failed to show within Stoger where these specific features are to be found.

Specifically, Stoger arguably teaches the presence of an intermediate door 303 (Stoger at figure 1, column 5, line 33). Stoger arguably teaches the presence of a sliding door 403 (Stoger at figure 2, column 6, line 38). Stoger arguably teaches the presence of an outer lock door 306 and an outer lock door 406 (Stoger at column 8, line 36). Stoger arguably teaches the presence of two inner lock openings 9 and 10 (Stoger at column 5, line 24). The Office Action identifies element 15 of Stoger as a plating bath, identifies element 304 of Stoger as a pre-treatment chamber, and identifies element 305 of Stoger as a transportation chamber (Office Action at page 4).

However, Stoger fails to disclose, teach or suggest the transportation chamber 305 as being connected to a post-treating chamber by a third gate valve, connected to a loading side wafer container by a fourth gate valve, and connected to an unloading side wafer container by a fifth gate valve. Thus, Stoger fails to disclose teach or suggest the transportation chamber being connected to a post-treating chamber by a third gate valve, connected to a loading side wafer container by a fourth gate valve, and connected to an unloading side wafer container by a fifth gate valve, as claimed.

Dötzer arguably teaches a process of mechanically shaping metal articles. However, Dötzer fails to account for the features shown hereinabove as being deficient from within Stoger.

Withdrawal of this rejection and allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

New claims

Claims 24-31 are dependent upon claim 23. Claim 23 is drawn to an apparatus for electroplating, comprising:

a loading side wafer container, a first gate valve connecting said transportation chamber with said loading side wafer container;

pre-treatment means for pre-treating an article to be electroplated, a second gate valve connecting a transportation chamber with said pre-treatment means;

electroplating means for electroplating said article by immersion of said article in an electroplating bath provided in a non-oxidative atmosphere, a third gate valve connecting said transportation chamber with said electroplating means;

a post-treating chamber, a fourth gate valve connecting said transportation chamber with said post-treating chamber; and

an unloading side wafer container, a fifth gate valve connecting said transportation chamber with said unloading side wafer container.

However, Stoger and Dötzer, either individually or as a whole, fail to disclose, teach or suggest a first gate valve connecting a transportation chamber with a loading side wafer container; a second gate valve connecting a transportation chamber with a pre-treatment means; a third gate valve connecting the transportation chamber with a electroplating means; a fourth gate valve connecting the transportation chamber with a post-treating chamber; and a fifth gate valve connecting the transportation chamber with a unloading side wafer container.

Allowance of the claims is respectfully requested.

Conclusion

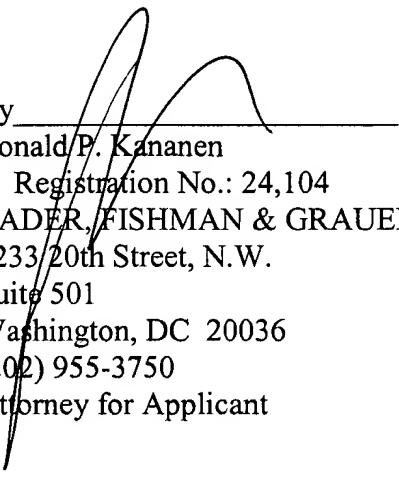
For the foregoing reasons, all the claims now pending in the present application are allowable, and the present application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, favorable reexamination and reconsideration of the application in light of the amendments and remarks is courteously solicited.

If the Examiner has any comments or suggestions that could place this application in even better form, the Examiner is requested to telephone Brian K. Dutton, Reg. No. 47,255, at 202-955-8753.

If any fee is required or any overpayment made, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge the fee or credit the overpayment to Deposit Account # 18-0013.

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Respectfully submitted,

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